

# Acoustic Drums

## REMO MASTERTOUCH

**T**HE ADVENT OF REMO'S Pre-Tuned drums marked their commitment to producing affordable drum kits, for use by either pro players or students. Since then Remo has expanded their drum division to include high-quality, tunable drum kits, and the Mastertouch is a recent example of this.

All Remo drums have Acousticon shells. Acousticon is formed with a thin wood fiber material, soaked in silica resin, and wrapped 19 times around a mandrel. The drums' sound is controlled by varying the resins used.

Mastertouch drums feature a new lug design—with a see-through "window"—that helps set them apart from Remo's Encore and Innovator lines. They're regular tunable lugs, rather than the Innovator's PTS latch or the Encore's unique tunable Powersnap concept. Also, like other new Remo kits, the Mastertouch's interior is black rather than the natural wood fiber color of older Remo drums.

The power bass drum has eight lugs per side, along with channeled metal hoops inlaid with the color of the drum's fin-

ish. T-handle tuners are used, and surprisingly, Remo hasn't included key rods at the bottom lugs. This would be a welcome modification, as drum-key operated tuning rods enable easier pedal mounting without the problem of a T-handle getting in the way. The Mastertouch bass drum utilizes externally mounted, foldaway, hinged spurs which, after their initial setting, never again need to be altered. These are locked in place via a wing bolt, and have a telescoping hexagonal leg (released by a drumkey) and a threaded rubber-to-spike tip. The spurs are rather tiny, compared to others, but they do keep the drum stable. (Remo has used metal hoops on their bass drums since the beginning, but I'm told that they're working on wood hoops for the near future. They also recently introduced powder-coated hoops, so it looks as if some options will be available.)

The drum was fitted with a Pinstripe batter, an Ebony front head with a vertical Remo logo, and a Remo Muff'l behind the playing head. (I'm a big fan of Muff'ls on bass drums, as they work well to reduce overring, flatten out the sound, and add some nice punch.) This drum was quite powerful with good depth. I added another Muff'l to the front side, and it was even punchier!

**Manufacturer's Response:** Dick Markus of Remo comments: "I find no problem with what Bob has to say about the drums. I'd like to point out that the Mastertouch's bass drum hoops are now all black channeled metal hoops. Regarding the "cons"—these are items that we too, recognize, and are under consideration for change."

**Manufacturer:** Remo, Inc. 12804 Raymer St., North Hollywood, CA 91605. (818) 983-2600

**Equipment Checklist:**

**Product:** Remo Mastertouch drum set #MA-4511

**Retail Price:** \$1,235.00

**Components:**

**Bass Drum:** 16" X 22"

**Mounted Toms:** 11" X 12",

12" X 13",

**Floor Tom:** 16" X 16"

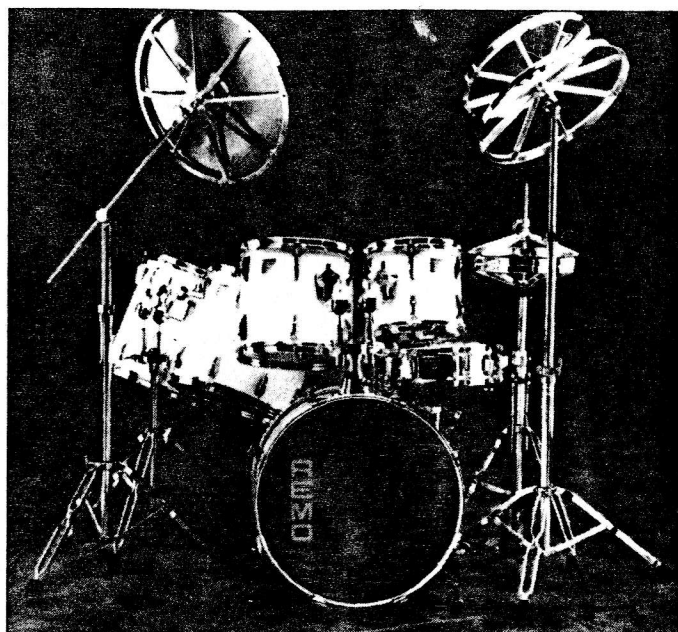
**Snare Drum:** 7" X 14"

**Features:** Acousticon shells; pressed drum hoops; metal bass drum hoop; Quadra finish covering; Remo Muff'l in bass drum; tom holder system; independent swivel ball with hexagonal L-arms; center-throw snare strainer with fine tension knobs on both sides.

**Colors:** White, black, chrome, blue, red, gold, gray; chrome or black "Prismatic."

**Pro's:** Competitively priced; built-in drumkey holder on base plate of tom mount; unique tom holder system.

**Con's:** Bass drums feature T-handle tuners on bottom lugs rather than drumkey rods; snare drum may need O-ring to dampen ring.



Remo's tom holder is fitted near the front of the bass drum shell, and utilizes a massive chrome base plate, through which passes a single downpost with a memory lock. The base plate contains a built-in drum key holder, which is ultra-convenient. Atop the downpost is a double-holed clamp block. Independent swivel ball arms fit into the holes, and also have memory locks. These holder arms have hexagonal L-shaped rods which mate with the tom brackets, allowing the drum to hang, rather than having a steel tube pass through it. The holder allows enough height and angle adjustment to please any player. It's fully adjustable and incredibly sturdy. (By the way, Remo is now making RIMS mounts available as optional equipment on their toms.)

The 12" and 13" toms have six lugs per side, while the 16" floor tom has eight per side. In addition, the floor tom has three legs which locate into brackets similar in appearance to the tom holder brackets, but in this case, the legs are rounded steel, knurled near their tops.

The three drums were fitted with Pinstripe batters and clear Diplomat bottoms, and were capable of good tonal depth and volume. The sound was round, but perhaps a bit more brilliant

than a traditional wood drum. For me, the drums didn't require any dampening, as they provided good attack and decayed promptly on their own.

The 7" X 14" snare has eight double-ended lugs, and a chrome covering. Its strainer throws off from the center, and has fine-tension knobs on both sides. The strainer is simplistic, but works very smoothly and silently.

The drum came fitted with a coated Ambassador batter and an Ambassador snare side, and had a fat, yet crisp sound. Rimshots were solid, although Latin-style rim clicks were a bit subdued. The drum does have a bit of inherent ring, and Remo should really include one of their O-rings with the drum to dampen that out—I used one, and it dramatically improved the sound. In total, the drum doesn't choke up under loud volumes, has good sensitivity for softer playing, and blends in quite nicely with the other drums in the kit.

Remo drum kits are catalogued without hardware, but separate hardware packs, or separate pieces, are available from the company. The 310 Series package includes a snare stand, hi-hat, bass drum pedal, straight cymbal stand, and boom stand for \$434.00 retail. The 510 Series is their top-of-the-line extra-heavy-

duty hardware; the same components for \$100.00 more. The lighter weight 100 and 110 Series have four pieces of hardware in their pre-packaged sets. The 510 Series features tripod bases, thick chrome tubing, and positive height tube clamp adjustments. The snare stand uses a ball system for angular positioning, and is able to go low enough to accommodate the deepest snare drums. Both the hi-hat and bass drum pedal have chain linkages and matching black grooved footboards. The drum pedal has a single expansion spring, while the hi-hat has double external springs for tension. Both work silently and efficiently. The 510 boom stand has a long boom arm with counterweight, and only one height-adjustable tier; the straight stand has two adjustable tiers.

All Remo drums have Quadura plastic coverings, which consist of various film layers with color sandwiched in between. Nine colors are currently available, including the new chrome and black "Prismatic" finishes. (See NAMM report on page 53 for more information on the "Prismatic" coverings.) The kit I tested was covered in black Quadura, which has a nice gloss, is pretty much scratch-resistant, and will hold up to temperature changes without wrinkling or bubbling. All seams on the finish are hidden from the audience's view, and speaking of cosmetics, Remo recently has redesigned their logo badges. They affix two badges to each tom, so that a Remo logo is always facing front, no matter which side of the kit the tom is mounted on. (They also have a badge surrounding each drum's venthole, with a serial number imprinted.)

#### The Verdict.

The kit reviewed here, without hardware, retails at \$1,235.00 which, by today's standards, is fairly inexpensive. The sound, the design, and nearly all the features are pro, without a doubt. In my opinion, Remo has a winner here with the Mastertouch kit.

—Bob Saydowski, Jr.

### Acoustic Drums

## PEARL CUSTOM CLASSIC SNARES

IN THIS DAY OF "STATE-OF-the-art" equipment, Pearl recently introduced their new snare drum line: the Custom Classic. These snare drums are available in 5-1/2" X 14" and 6-1/2" X 14" sizes. The 5-1/2" has eight double-ended lugs, while the 6-1/2" has ten lugs. Pearl has engineered a new bridge-type lug design for this line. These lugs only contact the shell at their top and bottom connecting points. To further isolate the lugs from the shell, Pearl uses backing gaskets (In fact, they also use a backing gasket on the drum's nameplate).

The Custom Classic shell is formed from a single piece of maple, and is 7.5 mm thick, with no reinforcing rings. The bearing edges are expertly rolled, without the sharpness at the top that is commonly seen. The shell's interior is beautiful, and so is the exterior, as Pearl finishes the shell in a liquid amber lacquer.

All hardware is brass-plated: the lugs, rods, strainer, hoops, venthole eyelet, rod washers—even the nameplate. The carbon steel snare wires are gold-plated, and connect to the strainer via the usual plastic strips. Pearl's S-012 strainer is quite simplistic, in that it uses a side-throw action, and has a fine-tension knob on the throwoff side. The butt end merely holds the snare strips in a Phillips screw clamp which is non-adjustable. The throwoff and butt also are operated by backing gaskets. The hoops are 2.0 mm solid brass so they're quite strong and able to withstand forceful rimshots without cracking or deforming.

I tested the 5-1/2" X 14" Custom Classic for a week, and played in it every sort of situation I could. The drum came fitted with a coated Ambassador batter head and Ambassador snare-side



head, with no dampener of any sort. This is not the sort of drum to use a thicker batter head on, as its sensitivity and tone would be greatly diminished. (In fact, I might even propose using a coated Diplomat batter.) The drum did have some inherent resonance; not dissonant, but a bit too much ring for my taste. Its sound was clear and unchoked, though. After I installed a Remo O-ring, the drum's sound tightened right up, and was superb for "Top 40" type playing. Rimshots still had some nice sustenance, without sounding boxy. To my ears, the Latin-style rimclick sound wasn't as loud as I would have liked, and wasn't as "open-sounding" as other drums I've played. The Custom Classic is fairly sensitive to soft playing.

There was a point where the drum wouldn't respond (ultra-soft playing), and trying to de-tension the snare wires only caused a lot of snare buzz in vibration with the other band instruments. While the strainer does work well mechanically, it really doesn't afford the extremes of sensitivity I had hoped to get.

Actually, the 5-1/2" Custom Classic fits in well with many musical styles. It has plenty of projection, along with a warm, woody sound. Its tuning range is average, and I'm prone to believe that higher pitches are neglected due to the type of bearing edge Pearl has formed. But, if it's supposed to be modelled after the "older" snare drums, the Custom Classic does certainly have that rounded sound.

**Manufacturer's Response:** none.  
**Manufacturer:** Pearl International, 408 Harding Industrial Dr., Nashville, TN 37211. (615)833-4477.  
**Product:** 5-1/2" X 14" Custom Classic Snare.  
**Retail Price:** \$600.00.  
**Shell Construction:** One-piece Maple.  
**Features:** Eight double-ended lugs; brass hoops (2.0 mm); side-throw strainer; gold-plated carbon steel 2.4-strand snare wire; one venthole.  
**Muffling:** None. **Finish:** Liquid

amber lacquer. **Weight:** Approx. 10 lbs.

**Pro's:** Classic warm wood-shell sound; beautiful interior and exterior finish; brass-plated hardware; sturdy 2.0 solid brass hoops; minimal lug contact with shell; good sound projection; rolled bearing edges.

**Con's:** Snare strainer's fine-tuning knob could be more sensitive; some inherent ring, muffled rimclick.



The 5-1/2" X 14" and 6-1/2" X 14" Custom Classic drums are available with the brass hoops at \$600.00 and \$660.00. The Custom Classic drums also can be obtained with chrome-plated hardware and Pearl's steel Super Hoops for \$350.00 and \$390.00, respectively.

### The Verdict.

All in all, Pearl's Custom Classic snare comes very close to matching the legendary snare sounds of old. The drum has power and volume when needed, but still retains the warmth of a solid wood shell. The Custom Classic features one of my favorite strainer designs; it's no-fuss. There are fewer mechanical pieces, so it takes less time to get the snares set up and sounding good. The strainer is silent and efficient, but I would have liked the fine-tune knob to be a bit more sensitive to minute tension adjustments. The exterior of the drum is simply beautiful, finished like high-class furniture, with an ultra-smooth texture. Along with the brass plating, the Custom Classic looks quite majestic. (Be sure to buy a foam-lined case for this baby!) I'd be anxious to see if Pearl takes this one step further and begins manufacturing complete drum sets in this fashion.

—Bob Saydowski, Jr.

### Drumheads

## CANA-SONIC POWER PLAY

**D**RUMS OFTEN SOUND BEST when they are brand new, in part because a new drumhead holds tension well. Naturally, manufacturers put a lot of effort into figuring out how to make drumheads last as long as possible, given all the abuse they take during normal playing.

With this in mind Cana-Sonic has introduced the new Power Series drumhead. The design features a solid one-piece, fiberglass-plastic head, which, according to the manufacturer, is designed to

**Manufacturer's Response:** none.  
**Equipment Checklist**  
**Manufacturer:** Cana-Sonic by Ancris, 415 Howe Ave., Box 661, Shelton, CT 06484. (203) 736-0969.  
**Product:** Power Play fiberglass drum heads  
**Sizes And Prices:**  
10"—\$24.00

12"—\$25.25  
13"—\$26.25  
14"—\$28.00  
15"—\$32.50.  
14" medium No-Overtone batter head—\$19.25  
**Pro's:** Strong, crisp toms, long-lasting, no denting or pitting.  
**Con's:** Cost more than mylar heads.

hold tension and last longer than mylar heads, and is guaranteed not to dent or pit.

For this review we equipped our toms with the Power Play heads on top and a lightweight resonant head on the bottom. The Power Play heads that we tested were 10", 12", 13", 14", and 15". Our 5-1/2" metal snare was equipped with the Cana-Sonic 14" medium No-Overtone batter head on top and a thin-weight snare head on the bottom.

The Power Play heads have an attractive, glossy black finish. The No-Overtone head is off-white, with a dot in the middle and a no-overtone ring molded into the diameter.

### The Verdict.

We tested the Cana-Sonic heads in a variety of playing situations, even taking them into the studio. After a good workout the heads still looked like new, without any signs of denting or pitting. The toms sounded strong and crisp and kept their tuning. After being played our 10" tom sounded even deeper than before, and projected better than ever. The other toms had a rich, deep sound but didn't project quite as much as we would have liked.

The medium No-Overtone snare head produced a sharp attack that cut through the sound of the band. Even after some heavy hitting there were no signs of wear. This might be ideal for concert work, when there's a fear of breaking a head in the middle of a show. With such a strong head, though, we had our doubts about whether the snare would be sensitive enough; but we were pleasantly surprised by the great response at all dynamic levels, with both sticks and brushes.

In the studio the tom heads produced a live, deep sound and recorded quite well. We used only a very small piece of tape on our 15" tom; otherwise no damping

was needed at all. The snare was recorded without any external muffling. It had a nice crack to it without any undesirable overtones. In fact, this head might almost sound too dry for some situations.

The Cana-Sonic drum heads feel good, have a natural resonant sound, and seem to be quite durable. Even though they cost almost twice as much as mylar heads, we feel they're a good buy.

—John Xepoleas

### Drumheads

## EVANS

**E**VANS WAS ONE OF THE first companies to make drumheads of synthetic materials. Though many of us think of two-ply, oil-filled heads with a dead, dry sound when we hear the name Evans, the introduction of their Cad/Cam hoop, Resonant-Bottom head, and Uno 58 batter should turn that opinion around.

To give these new heads a proper workout I equipped my toms with the Resonant Bottom tom-tom heads, sizes 10", 12", 13", 14", and 15". These are single-ply, medium-weight heads designed to give the drum a fuller range and more resonant tone. The drums already were equipped with Remo Pinstripe batter heads on top. The result after putting on the resonant bottom heads was a much fuller and more resonant sound than before.

I then replaced the Pinstripe

**Manufacturer's Response:** Bob Beals, President of Evans Products replies: Due to the sometimes long lead time between sending a product for review and the appearance of the review in a magazine, it is quite possible that the heads your reviewer had on hand may not have been the most current versions of our product line. We have recently developed a brush-coating material that is much more durable than anything we had been able to offer previously. I'd also like to mention one of our new products, called E-rings. These are muffling rings made from our Blue-X drumhead material. They are designed to remove some of a drum's high overtones. Available in 10", 12", 13", 14", 15", and 16" sizes, they may be just the thing if a drummer finds our Uno 58 clear 1000's a bit too open.  
**Equipment Checklist:**  
**Manufacturer:** Evans Products, Box 58, Dodge City, KS 67801. (316) 225-1308.  
**Products:** Single-ply medium-weight Resonant Bottom tom-tom

heads, Uno 58 Clear 1000-weight batter heads; 200-and 300-weight resonant bottom snare heads; Uno 58 White and Glass coated, single-ply batter heads.  
**Sizes And Prices:**  
**Resonant Bottom tom-tom heads:**  
10"—\$10.20  
12"—\$10.60  
13"—\$11.60  
14"—\$12.00  
15"—\$13.20  
**Uno 58 Clear 1000-weight batter heads:**  
10"—\$10.20  
12"—\$10.60  
13"—\$11.60  
14"—\$12.00  
15"—\$13.50  
**Resonant Snare Heads:** 200-weight and 300-weight: \$10.40  
Uno 58 1000-weight White: \$15.20  
Uno 58 1000-weight Glass: \$12.00  
**Pro's:** Outstanding Resonant Bottom tom-tom heads. Bright, crisp sound with the Uno 58s. Competitively priced.  
**Con's:** Uno 58 toms may be too resonant for some tastes.